

310 Second Street, S.E.  
Washington 3, D. C.

11 June 1954

The Honorable J. Edgar Hoover  
Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation  
Washington 25, D.C.

Dear Mr. Hoover:

For a couple of years Mrs. Friedman and I have devoted many leisure hours to the preparation of the manuscript of a book which is an expansion of a lecture I gave at the Folger Shakespeare Library several years ago. The lecture and the book deal with certain cryptographic systems which, it is alleged, "prove" that the Shakespearean Plays were written by somebody other than the William Shakespeare, of Stratford-on-Avon.

One of the best of these cryptographic "proofs" is that forming the basis of a large and quite important work entitled The Biliteral Cipher of Sir Francis Bacon, published in 1900 by Mrs. Elizabeth Wells Gallup. Mrs. Gallup's work is still firmly believed in by thousands of people here and abroad and still is warmly discussed by devoted Baconians.

The Biliteral Cipher is an authentic cipher invented by Sir Francis Bacon and described by him in his De Augmentis Scientiarum, 1623. It involves the use of two very slightly different fonts of type - the differences being so small as to escape detection except when specifically sought. There is no doubt that the cipher could be used, or that it could have been used in books of the Elizabethan period; the question is, however, not could it have been used but was it used in books of that period? Mrs. Gallup's work is devoted to an attempt to prove that it was used by Bacon, to hide a secret biography as well as evidence of his authorship of the Plays.

The question as to the actuality of use of the biliteral cipher reduces itself to a question of typography and to the question whether it is possible to prove (1) that there are minute differences in the type fonts, (2) that these differences can be categorized into two sets of capital letters and two sets of lower-case letters, and (3) that the two different fonts were actually used in accordance with the principles of the biliteral cipher.

In the course of our studies it occurred to me that the excellent technical staff and laboratory facilities of the Federal Bureau of Investigation might be very helpful in looking into certain questions as to type forms. I explained to Mr. S. D. Ellis, of your office, the nature of the study I was making and asked if he could put me in touch with a technician of your laboratory who is an expert in matters such as type identification, with whom I might discuss the problem.

Mr. Ellis was able to refer me to your Dr. Fred G. Miller, and I lost no time in getting together with him. In his consideration of the problem put before him, which I understand he studied only during his own leisure hours, Dr. Miller was of course greatly aided by the excellent facilities available to him and he recently completed his investigation. His brief but quite admirable report, accompanied by photographic exhibits, will be of great value in our presentation and evaluation of the Gallup work.

When our write-up of what Dr. Miller did is completed, I shall, of course, submit that part of our manuscript to you for your approval, but in the meantime I do want to indicate our great appreciation of your courtesy in making Dr. Miller's services and the laboratory facilities of the Federal Bureau of Investigation available for this study. I wish you would also transmit to Dr. Miller our very real appreciation of and thanks for his excellent and highly useful collaboration.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM F. FRIEDMAN